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Northern District of West Virginia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 22, 2013

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Clarksburg Woman Indicted for Attempt to Intimidate and Harass Federal Witness

Federal Grand Jury also returns seven drug indictments

ELKINS, WEST VIRGINIA — United States Attorney William J. Ihlenfeld, II, announced that an investigation by the Greater Harrison Drug & Violent Crime Task Force and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has led to a federal indictment being returned this last in Elkins

NICOLE BENNETT, age 33, of Clarksburg, West Virginia, was charged with one count of "Intentional Harassment to Dissuade Another Person from Assisting in Criminal Prosecution" and one count of "Making Materially False Statements and Representations." BENNETT, who is in custody, faces up to three years in prison on the harassment charge and up to five years in prison on the false statement charge.

In the seven separate drug cases:

ROBERT VAUGHN BARNETTE, II, age 28, of Weston, West Virginia, and MATTHEW PAUL SELLERS, age 25, of Annapolis, Maryland, were named in a twenty-four Indictment charging them with "Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute and to Distribute Methamphetamine and Pseudoephedrine."

BARNETTE faces a total of seventeen counts and SELLERS faces a total of ten counts.

In addition to the conspiracy charge, other charges include "Maintaining a Drug-Involved Premise," "Possession of Material Used to Manufacture Methamphetamine," "Possession of Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine," and "Attempt to Possess Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine."

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BARNETTE and SELLERS each face up to twenty years in prison on the conspiracy, premise, and possession charges; and up to ten years in prison on the possession of material charge.

This case was investigated by the Lewis County Sheriff's Department.

TIMOTHY ALLEN HAWKS, age 20, ELIZABETH CHRISTINE SAMPSELL, age 42, COURTNEY LEE KNIGHT, age 30, and CYNTHIA MARIE TAYLOR, age 28, of Moorefield, were named in a fourteen-count Indictment charging them with "Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute and to Distribute Methamphetamine and Pseudoephedrine."

HAWKS faces a total of three counts, SAMPSELL faces a total of nine counts, KNIGHT faces a total of four counts, and TAYLOR faces a total of two counts.

In addition to the conspiracy charge, other charges include "Maintaining a Drug-Involved Premise," "Possession of Material Used to Manufacture Methamphetamine," "Possession of Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine," and "Attempt to Possess Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine."

HAWKS, SAMPSELL, KNIGHT and TAYLOR each face up to twenty years in prison on the conspiracy, premise, and possession charges; and up to ten years in prison on the possession of material charge.

JOSE FRANCISCO RAMIREZ a/k/a "CHICO," age 26, of Moorefield, West Virginia, was named in a nine-count Indictment charging him with eight methamphetamine-related charges and one count of Reentry of Previously Deported Alien. RAMIREZ, who is in custody, faces up to thirty years in prison on each of the methamphetamine charges and up to twenty years in prison on the illegal reentry charge.

The HAWKS and RAMIREZ cases were investigated by the Potomac Highlands Drug & Violent Crime Task Force, consisting of officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the West Virginia State Police - Bureau of Criminal Investigations and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (ICE/HSI).

APRIL MARIE CHENOWETH, age 33, of Elkins, was named in a seven-count Indictment charging her with "Maintaining a Drug-Involved Premise," and six methamphetamine-related charges. CHENOWETH, who is in custody, faces up to twenty years in prison on each count. This case was investigated by the Monongahela National Forest-Law Enforcement and Investigations.

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TRACI LYNN WILSON, age 27, of Moorefield, was named in a one-count Indictment charging her with "Distribution of Methamphetamine within 1,000 Feet of Moorefield Middle School." WILSON faces up to 40 years in prison. This case was investigated by the Potomac Highlands Drug & Violent Crime Task Force, consisting of officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the West Virginia State Police - Bureau of Criminal Investigations.

The BARNETTE, HAWKS, RAMIREZ, CHENOWETH and WILSON cases will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Stephen D. Warner.

DANIEL JOSEPH HANST, age 27, BRANDI RENEE SMITH, age 26, LISA NICOLE SMITH, age 24 and ANTHONY WILLIAM OURS, age 32, of Fairmont, West Virginia, were named in a seventy-four count Indictment charging them with "Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute and to Distribute Methamphetamine and Pseudoephedrine."

HANST faces a total of thirty-four counts, BRANDI SMITH faces a total of twenty-seven counts; LISA SMITH faces a total of eleven counts, and OURS faces a total of seven counts.

In addition to the conspiracy charge, other charges include "Maintaining a Drug-Involved Premise," "Possession of Material Used to Manufacture Methamphetamine," "Possession of Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine," and "Attempt to Possess Pseudoephedrine to be Used in the Manufacture of Methamphetamine."

HANST, BRANDI SMITH, LISA SMITH and OURS each face up to twenty years in prison on the conspiracy, premise, and possession charges; and up to ten years in prison on the possession of material charge. This case will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Brandon S. Flower and was investigated by the Three Rivers Drug Task Force, consisting of officers from the Fairmont Police Department and the Fairmont State University Police Department.

All of the charges contained in the above-referenced indictments are merely accusations and not evidence of guilt, and each defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. Under the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, the actual sentence imposed will be based upon the seriousness of the offense and the criminal history, if any, of the defendant.

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